

The Iowa School for the Blind

Vinton, Iowa



HV1661

P



MISS JOHNSON—Teacher



MISS STARR—Teacher



Grace and Henry Bosch



FAL, faithful and devoted friend of the children. Died June 17, 1930.

14V1661
P
COPY 1

C.1


Helps and Suggestions for Parents of Blind Children

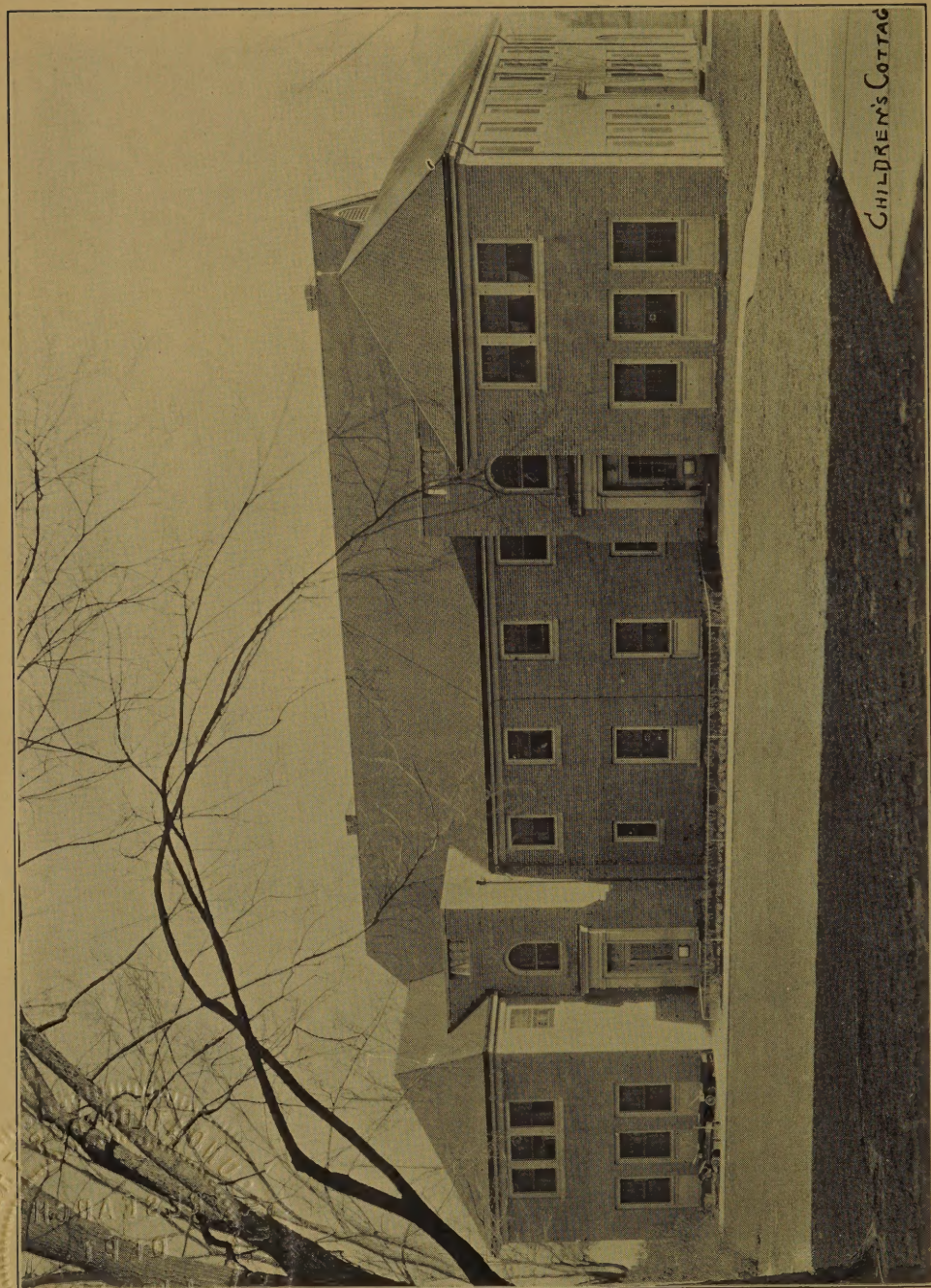
By SUPT. F. E. PALMER

It is not hard to understand the utter grief and despair that might come to parents when they discover, for the first time, that the child of their affections has been born blind, or has been denied sight after that gift has been once bestowed. Without doubt there are many, many heartaches and occasions of sorrow. Possibly with the knowledge that the handicapped one must go over the pathway of the years without sight, comes also a dark picture of blindness. Perhaps there arises, at once, a vision of the child grown to manhood or womanhood, alone in his or her isolation, so handicapped as to be of no service to society, without hope, without friends, with neither the ability nor the inclination to walk the upward way, an object of pity and commiseration. Perhaps into the picture the blind beggar has walked; perhaps a neglected, despairing, despondent, thoroughly discouraged individual with out sight has come into the foreground of that picture; perhaps the picture is wholly lacking in high lights. Hence, the fathers and mothers of boys and girls who are destined to go the ways of physical darkness, look toward the future with dread and sometimes with fear; for in many situations of life there is an inclination to look on the dark side.

While there are perhaps deep shadows in the picture but there are also the high lights and the color effects, yet there are lines that give the picture beauty and balance; for into the picture come trooping many, many splendid men and women who are traveling the highways of life worthily and who are living beautifully and usefully. The number of blind men and women who "see beyond sight" greatly outnumbers those who have no soul-sight. The number of blind men and women who "move upward along a Godward way" is much greater than they who stay within the shell of their physical handicap. Happiness and love and life are as possible for the blind as for the sighted. Every blind child should be taught to go forward in that belief. There is a long list of blind men and women who have made conspicuous contributions to the world's welfare, in practically every realm of life, some of whom the world has not been worthy.

Therefore, this little booklet has been compiled in the belief that the blind child should have every care and consideration that is usually given to the sighted child; that at an early date he should be taught to believe in himself, in his fellow men and in his God. In the writing of this little booklet there has always been the hope that fathers and mothers who may have children without sight may find such qualities of mind and heart in these children as shall give real joy and happiness; and that the training and development of these children shall come to have first consideration. This booklet goes to you in the hope that you will love the blind child as tenderly and as wisely as though the little one had sight; and that you will plan largely and hopefully for his future. In the gift of your little blind baby, it may be that God has placed in your arms a gift of rare beauty and worth, neither to be neglected nor pitied. The little blind baby has come to you, helpless, and dependent entirely upon your love and wisdom. He needs your care, your help, your direction. He is dependent upon you to give him the proper start in life; he needs your help in the development of mind, body and soul. When you look into those blinded eyes, neither you nor any one who has contacts with the child's life has a right to assume that God has delt you a cruel blow, because of those blinded eyes; nor have you the right to neglect to give this blinded one the best that is found in the way of care, of guidance, of training, and of education.





During the year 1929-30, eighteen little boys and sixteen small girls were housed in the Children's Cottage. The Cottage also has two class rooms, dining room and kitchen.

At the Iowa School for the Blind, it has been found that the children who attend there come from three classes of homes: First, the home where the parents are so full of pity for the little blinded one that every duty, every burden is lovingly lifted from his shoulders. He is relieved of all obligations and is shut out from all means of normal development. It is, of course, a mistaken kindness.



Boys' living Room-CHILDREN'S COTTAGE

The home of the second type is the one where the parents are in such despair over the handicap of blindness that they surrender all of their obligations to the child, except those relating to food and clothing. Thinking that the blind child is without possibilities of training and education, without a chance in the world for usefulness, they neglect the training in self reliance that should be the right of every child, whether sighted or sightless.

The third type of home is the one where the whole family treat the blind child as having normal intelligence, normal possibilities, normal potentialities; and so thinking in the terms of the normal child, the members of the family try to teach the blind brother or sister self-reliance and independence. They begin early to teach the member to whom sight has been denied to walk, to talk, to play, to laugh, to sing, to have proper table manners, to care for himself properly at the toilet, to dress and undress himself—in short the blind baby is given the same kind of teaching, though with greater patience, as the sighted baby should receive.

Now as far as the development of the blind baby is concerned the results are about the same whether he comes from a home of the first kind or the second kind; for in neither home is the child taught to do by actually doing, or trying to do certain possible things which every child born into the world should be taught to do. We learn to do by doing. This is a fundamental law of life, and is as true of the blind as of the sighted. Teach the blind baby to do the things which every normal child should be taught to do; and forget that he is blind, except in the greater patience required and the greater knowledge and skill necessary. Build upon the things that remain, instead of lamenting the thing that has been denied or taken away.

The child who comes from a home of the third kind is indeed fortunate, in that he is given a chance for self-expression, a chance to do by actually doing; a chance to develop self-reliance and independence through self-activity.

But often well-meaning parents are at a loss to know what to do or how to do the helpful thing. Great wisdom and love are necessary in the training of a sighted child; but in the training and development of the blind child not only are great wisdom and love necessary, but patience and knowledge must be added to these in large measure. Teachers should be frequently consulted; the advice of specialists should occasionally be sought; books should be read and digested; mothers and fathers who have successfully helped their children to increase "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," should have a part.

This little booklet goes to you in the spirit of kindness. It does not strive to include all that might be written about the education of the blind child. It merely throws out a few suggestions which it is hoped will be helpful, but they are only suggestions. There are two or three reasons why they have been written down for your consideration:

1. To emphasize the fact that a blind child, as well as a sighted child, learns to do by doing. If he is to develop normally, he must be directed in his occupations; he must have a chance to develop his muscles through activities that will call those muscles into play. He must have activities that will direct his thinking and will develop useful habits of life. In other words, the blind child must have a chance to develop normal qualities. "Blindisms" are to be avoided.

2. To further emphasize the fact that a blind child can be trained and educated, as well as a sighted child, unless belonging to the idiot class. This statement has been proved again and again.

3. To offer a few suggestions that may help mothers and fathers of blind children to meet the educational needs of such children.

4. To suggest some things to avoid in the training and development of children who are blind.

BELIEVE—The very first suggestion, because the most important one of all, is that you believe in the possibilities of growth, development, and future happiness of the blind baby. This is fundamental; for if you do not believe in the possibilities of the blind baby it is not likely that any intelligent plan will be put forth for his training and education. You simply must believe, and then believing you must study to do the things that will best promote the baby's welfare. No disappointment, because of the baby's blindness, should be permitted to affect the baby's chance to grow into gracious manhood or womanhood. Do not, for a single minute, allow yourself to believe that there is nothing in life for your little sightless one; for there may be a world of usefulness, a world of beauty, a world of goodness. Of course, the baby starts out on the journey of life with a serious handicap, but a handicap which by careful training and helpful direction and wise management may be wholly overcome. Many, many blind men and women have seemingly used their handicap as stepping stones to high things. Maybe your baby will. At any rate, believe it.

CHILD STUDY—Study your blind baby. Of course, such advice is more or less over-worked, but nevertheless it is good advice. Study the child's likes and dislikes, the little habits that seem to grow out of his handicap and which may help to hinder his acceptance by society in the future; Study the instincts as they begin to manifest themselves that you may give them a wholesome direction. Make note of any disagreeable tendencies that may be on the way and in an intelligent and patient way try to substitute agreeable ones. An intelligent study of your child will help to give him a better start in life. Remember that you are dealing with a personality that is different from every other personality in the world, and you should try by every reasonable means to keep that personality true to the very best that life has to offer.

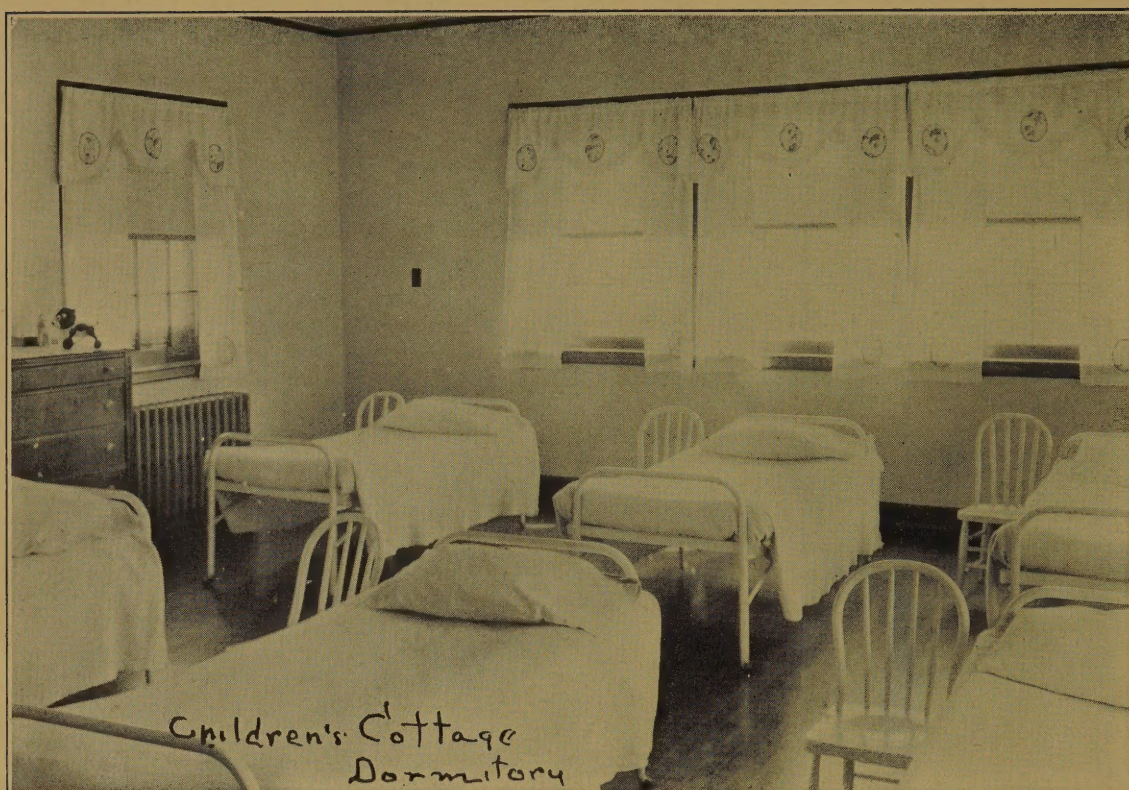
LANGUAGE—Language is fundamental to all education, and unless the blind child learns very early in life to talk correctly and intelligently, the process of education will be retarded. Talk to the blind baby just as you would were the baby sighted. Teach him early how to use words and sentences correctly, and in a way to convey definite meaning. This part of the child's education should not be neglected until he goes to school. But the capacity for speech will develop only in proportion as knowledge is acquired through sense perception. Therefore, help the child to gain ideas through the medium of objects producing sound; or giving sensations of touch, smell, or taste. First, object; second, the sensation that the object produces; third, the message that these sensations convey to the mind; fourth, a giving back the message through the medium of speech—that is the cycle.

SENSE TRAINING—This is very important. As soon as the baby hands begin to reach out, see to it that those hands are given objects to handle. Since sight has been denied, it is so important that the other senses be developed with greater care. There should be objects of sound, of touch, of taste, of smell to give the child mental sensations, but it is important that these objects be associated with the ideas that belong to these mental sensations. For illustration, a ball should be associated with the idea of weight, size, form, hardness or softness, the kind of materials that have gone into the ball, etc.; and out of these ideas correct forms of speech should be developed. The object, whether of sound, of touch, of taste, or of smell, should be used to advance the child's training.

It, therefore, follows that much thought should be given to the selection of the playthings for the blind child. Blocks of different shapes and sizes should be given him, and he should be made to understand the differences in these. Animals of different coverings, such as wool, fur, or hair, should be among his playthings; and he should be taught to recognize wool as wool, fur as fur, and hair as hair. Dolls of different sizes and different nationalities, with different kinds of dresses, etc., should not only help to amuse the sightless child, but they should also give him ideas and materials of speech.

As soon as the child begins to recognize sound, teach him to think properly in terms of sound; to discriminate among the different sounds. He cannot begin too early. **Do not wait for the school age to arrive.** Take for instance, the different voices which the blind child will naturally hear in the home. Assist him to associate the voices of the persons with whom he comes in contact with the names of the persons. "The voice must be to him as the face to the child with sight and he cannot begin to learn too early people in this way." In the years to come, it will pay large dividends from the larger and completer life, when the child has grown into the realm of youth.

There are many, many ways by which the sense of hearing can be developed, provided the blind child is taught to listen and is helped to associate the familiar sounds of every day life with the ideas of correct thought and feeling. There are thousands of sounds that will come within the range of the child's hearing, which will give him food for thought and subjects of expression. The animal world is rich in sounds; so is the bird world, the world of nature, and the world of man's activities and life. The world of sound is indeed splendidly rich in its opportunity of training.



Children's Cottage
Dormitory

Then there is the sense of taste to be developed. Usually the sense of taste is somewhat neglected in the educational processes of the school, but it **must not be neglected** in the case of the blind child. Otherwise another sense is lost to the blind child. As in the case of the other senses, the sense of taste should go along with the development of language. In other words, the child should not only learn to recognize different sensations of taste but these different sensations should be associated with words and sentences and objects. The different sensations of taste should be connected with language development. There are four main tastes, others being a blending of these four, namely, sweet, salt, sour (acid), and bitter. These four fundamental tastes should be carefully taught and then as many blended taste sensations as possible. The objects that give these sensations are in every home.

Another of the senses is the sense of smell. "This sense is so small and so unobtrusive a servant in the routine of human existence that it loses much of the credit which is its due." However, this sense and its development are important, especially in the life of a blind child. There is a table of six primary odors, out of which it is probably true that all smells are compounded.

1. Spicy—as given off from nutmeg, cloves and ginger.
2. Flowery—as given off from heliotrope, lily, roses, carnations, hyacinths, etc.
3. Fruity—as given off from oranges, lemons, grape fruit, etc.
4. Resinous or balsamic—as given off from turpentine, etc.

5. Putrid—as given off from vegetables, meats or fruits that have decayed.
6. Smoky—as given off from burning leaves, hot tar, etc. The scientific name is empyreumatic and means “a live coal covered with ashes,” giving the idea of burning or smoking.

The importance of the sense of taste is emphasized by the fact that a great many varieties of food could not be recognized and differentiated were it not for the sense of taste, such as vanilla extract, pineapple syrup, banana, grape, tea, chocolate, sour milk, kerosene, claret, rhubarb, onion, eggs, and boiled turnip.

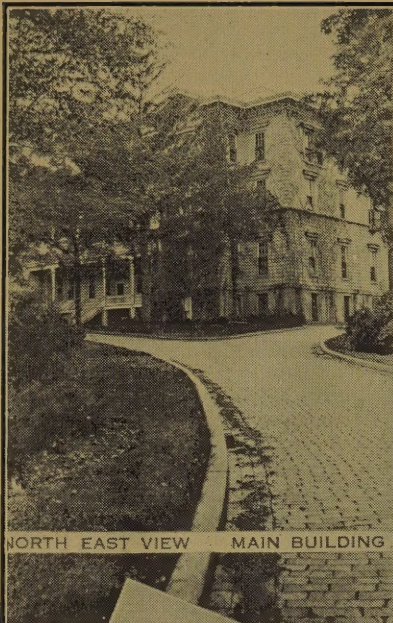
Of course, a knowledge of all this is of no value to the child who is blind if he is not trained at a very early age to differentiate. He will be able to do this only as he is taught



by giving the sense to be trained a chance to function and act. Whether it is the sense of touch, sound, taste or smell, development and growth is possible only through a stimulation of the sense itself. But this growth in order to be of any value must constantly be associated with thought and language.

OCCUPATIONS—The blind child, even more than his sighted brother, should have wholesome occupations. This, at times, will put the father and mother at their wits' end, but the problem of wholesome occupation for the blind child, if correctly solved, will pay in large dividends in the future. Idleness is about the worse thing that can happen to a blind child, or any other child for that matter.

Once upon a time a little girl came to the Iowa School for the Blind, who said that



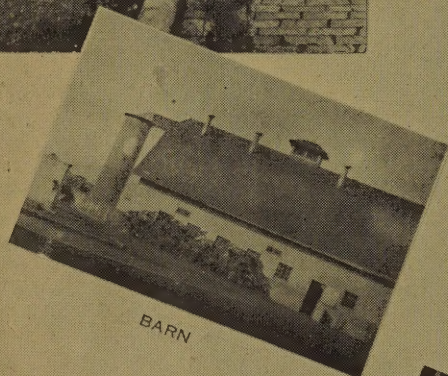
NORTH EAST VIEW MAIN BUILDING



SOUTH VIEW MAIN BUILDING



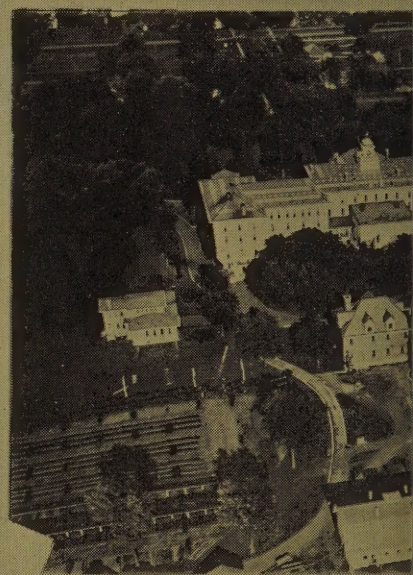
CAMPUS



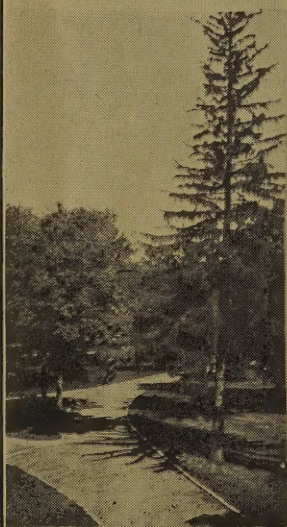
BARN



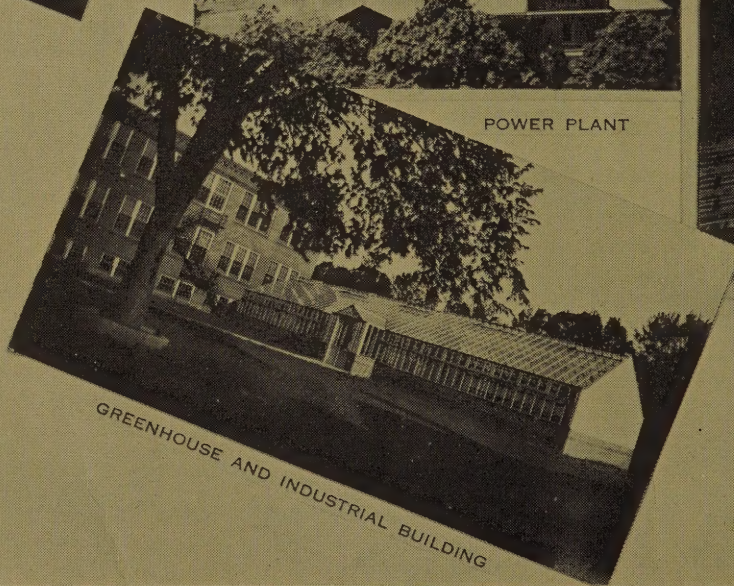
POWER PLANT



AEROPLANE



CAMPUS VIEW



GREENHOUSE AND INDUSTRIAL BUILDING



VIEW



GYMNASIUM



FRONT ENTRANCE MAIN BUILDING



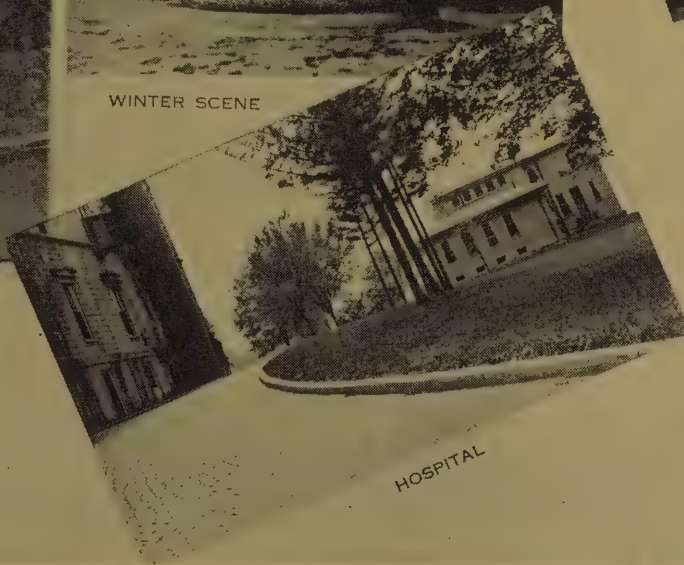
VIEW



WINTER SCENE



LAUNDRY



HOSPITAL



NORTH WING

she was thankful for a book. She added that before she reached the School for the Blind her only occupation was lacing and unlacing her shoes. Poor little kiddie! Lacing and unlacing one's shoes is something, but it is not enough. There are so many occupations possible that it seems almost criminal to confine a child to a single one. At least, from an educational standpoint such a limitation of occupations would tend to limit the child's growth and future usefulness. The following occupations that are suggested are only a few of those which might be available—building with blocks, playing with toys, caring for the dolls or animals, stringing beads (large ones only), playing in the sand pile (suitable for warm weather), playing with balls, stringing empty spools on a strong twine, playing with dishes and other household utensils, riding the hobby horse or the kiddy car.

SELF-RELIANCE—The blind child, as well as his sighted brother, should be early



trained to be self-reliant and independent. At this point the parents need to exercise great wisdom. There is a picture that comes to us from the bible that is very suggestive of Mother Nature's wisdom. The mother eagle is represented as pushing the young eagles out of the home nest when they have reached a certain stage of their development, but as they fall out of the nest and begin to try their wings, soon growing tired, the mother eagle swoops down under them and takes them upon her back, until they are rested and ready to try their young wings again. Soon the young eagles are independent, and after awhile become flying companions of the mother bird. The young eagles are better eagles because they have become self-reliant.

Here is a great lesson for the human mother. The blind child, on reaching a certain point in his development, must be given opportunities to test out the powers that nature has

been nursing; but the hand of the father or mother must be ever ready, in the divine spirit of patience, to bear the child up when the flight becomes too great for the undeveloped powers. The eagle's method is good. In any event the blind child has a right to develop independence and self-reliance. Therefore,

a. Teach the sightless child to walk naturally and without fear of the forward step. The mother hand will be needed often to save the little one from unnecessary bumps. Much will have to be done to overcome fear, but at all events the little one should be taught to walk naturally, with body erect and face aglow.

b. Teach the little one to dress and undress himself without too much delay or difficulty. The process may be very, very slow, but do not give up. Any child that has the



use of hands can be taught to dress and undress himself. Do not allow yourself to believe that it is too hard. It is not. Of course, it would take less time for you to do this little chore for the child yourself. But it is not a problem of saving time; it is a problem of teaching the little one self-reliance and independence. Your blind child will never learn to do anything by your doing it—he must learn this as well as many, many other things by actually doing the thing himself, or at least making the attempt.

A few children who have entered the Iowa School for the Blind have suffered because of parental neglect, but more have suffered because of over-indulgence and over-attention. The sensible father and mother will control the impulse to do more for the child than is actually necessary or advisable from the standpoint of good instruction and train-

ing. Of course, the eagle may have to swoop down frequently; but still the young birds must have a chance to try, and to develop power and speed in their wings.

As early as possible the blind baby should be taught to care for his needs at the toilet, in a proper way. Insist upon regularity in the eliminating processes of nature, and also upon utmost cleanliness. These can be and should be formed early in life. Here again great patience and wisdom are needed. Again the mother eagle will be watchful but not over-indulgent. If the child is a bed-wetter, do not ignore the child's need of attention and instruction. Consult a wise physician; help the child in every way to avoid bed-wetting; insist upon a visit to the toilet before the voiding occurs. Very great care must be exercised on the part of parents and friends in order that the blind child does not form the habit of



Giles' Living Room-Children's Cottage

masterbation. Here again great watchfulness is necessary. Do not allow the child to handle the organs of reproduction, either at the toilet or other places. Watch out for this with the keenest kind of solicitude. Masterbation should be made impossible, if parental watchfulness can make it impossible.

Again, the sightless child should be taught to eat his food with becoming decency. Slovenly manners at the table are not at all necessary on the part of the blind child. At this point, the blind child, as well as the sighted child, can be taught to eat with becoming delicacy and neatness. Of course, from the very nature of the case, the development of correct habits will take patience and loving care, but if the future good of the blind child is regarded as important, then proper training in table manners is quite important.

1. He should not be permitted to eat rapidly, stuffing food into his mouth.
2. As early as possible he should be taught the proper use of the fork. The spoon should be used for liquids and the knife for cutting.

The solid foods will need to be cut, at least for a number of years. The way to get the food on the fork, or in the spoon, or between the fingers will take much time and patience, but these lessons should be persistently taught, for the sake of the child's manhood or womanhood years. Many, many repetitions will be necessary, but do not grow impatient because of repetitions. Cling to the belief that the child to whom sight has been denied is not fundamentally different from the child to whom sight has been given, unless allowed to become different because of certain "blindisms" that have become habits. Many par-



ents make the mistake of thinking that blindness sets the child upon a pathway entirely different from that which the sighted child is destined to travel, and so the blind child very often becomes a "peculiar" child and sometimes a very disagreeable child. Therefore, there should be a rigid insistence, at all times, upon:

- a. An observance of proper manners, in the various situations of life. Courteousness and politeness should at all times be emphasized. A blind child can learn, as well as a sighted child, to say "please," "thank you," "excuse me," when those terms are permissible; can learn to know the silence that is golden; can learn that proper conversation is pleasant to both listener and speaker; can learn, in short, pleasing manners.

- b. Reasonable obedience. A blind child should be taught to obey reasonable orders;

for the blind child who refuses to heed the voice of proper authority is no more desirable than the sighted child who will not pay the respect of reasonable obedience to proper constituted authority.

c. Respect for the rights of others. The handicapped child should not be permitted to monopolize the whole stage of family life. It is not good for either child or family.

ORDERLINESS—The handicapped child should early learn the lesson of orderliness. He should have a place for the playthings and should be taught to put the playthings in their place when through with them, in orderly arrangement. This is a lesson not hard to teach but it is very important in the life of the handicapped child.

BLINDISMS—There are certain peculiar, sometimes offensive, mannerisms that the



sightless one is apt to acquire unless carefully watched and taught to avoid. Remember that your child will some day have to take his place in the society of sighted people, consequently he should, as far as possible, be taught to avoid those peculiarities that call attention, in a hindering way, to the fact that he is blind. Among some of the "blindisms" that should be avoided are the following: Putting the fingers in the eyes, walking with the head down and the shoulders stooped; sitting with the head reclining; walking with little, short steps, as if afraid to move forward; shaking the hands or dancing up and down, when something unusual happens, shaking the head or wagging it from side to side; continually rocking backward and forward when in a sitting position. To guard against the formation of such habits, the child without sight should not be permitted to sit alone, in doors, for a

long time, simply because he is content to do so; he must be roused to some line of activity, because it is his salvation. If permitted to sit undisturbed by the hour, he is sure to acquire disagreeable habits which are not easily overcome. The handicapped child should be encouraged to romp and play with sighted children—the sighted brothers and sisters should always include the blind brother or sister in their play. Perhaps the little blind one will get bruises, but the bruises are much more easily cured than the disagreeable habits that are the result of inattention and inactivity. Sighted children also get bruises but they are not denied the possibility of development through activity because of them.

SELF-PITY—Little or nothing should be said to the sightless child, or in the hearing of the sightless child, about blindness. The fact of the matter is the blind child should be made, as far as possible, to forget his blindness. Emphasize the things that remain rather than the things that have been taken away. Simply do not let friends and neighbors say in the hearing of Johnny, "Isn't it too bad that Johnny is blind!" Johnny must not get in the habit of thinking that he is the subject of pity; he should, on the contrary, be made to feel that he is the subject of hope. He must be taught to look up and not down; out and not in, all the time. If possible, do not refer or let sympathizing friends refer to his handicap in a condoling way, but rather as something to be overcome by work and study.

SCHOOL—As soon as the blind child reaches the school age, he should be sent to school. Many parents make the mistake of postponing the entrance to school. As a rule this works harm to the child. In the first place the child gets the idea that school for him is not important; and in the second place, the older children find that the adjustments of school are harder than the younger children. It does not require argument to establish the fact that if the blind boy or girl is to be trained to overcome his or her handicap, school and the training received in the school is even more necessary than for the sighted child. Furthermore, the blind child needs special training. The Iowa School for the Blind is prepared to give this special training, as well as other schools for the blind. The schools for the sighted, as now organized, cannot give this special training. Schools for the blind are organized with especial reference to the sightless children. The Iowa School for the Blind is your school, and the opportunities that it offers the sightless children of Iowa are great. Look it up; help make it the best possible. You owe it to your little sightless one.

BOOKS—There are many books which may be of help to the father and mother of the little one who is without sight. The following are some of the many that are listed:

Mother Goose Rimes; A Book of Nursery Rhymes, arranged by Chas. Welch, published by D. C. Heath and Co., Chicago, Ill.; Finger Plays for Nursery and Kindergarten, published by the Norwood Press, Norwood, Mass.; Stories for the Children's Hour, Bailey and Lewis, published by Milton Bradley Co., Springfield, Mass.; Story Telling Time, Frances Wilde Danielson, published by Pilgrim Press, Chicago, Ill.; Silver Pennies, Blanche Thompson, published by MacMillan Co., Chicago, Ill.

Finally, believe in your blind baby—with a hope that is born of patience; with a love that is strengthened by wisdom; with a faith that is looking forward to final victory. As was said in the beginning, perhaps God has placed in your arms a gift of rare beauty and worth. Try to believe it.



Joseph Amundson



Alvin Farwell



Gerard Shepley



Pierce Knox



Bobby Roberts



John Goode



Joe Reilly



Elmer Gerhardt



Harry Miller



John Baldwin



Dick Peters



Bernard Weiss



Victor Hanson



William Martin



Howard Bozinger



Paul G. Rosvick



John Powers



Norman Michael

Boys of the Dormitory
CHILDREN'S COTTAGE



Mrs. Hewitt



Helen Mae Porter



Cora Bennett



Darnice Kelly



Leabel Munger



Kathleen Votaw



Dorothy Leonard



Lucille Geestland



Myrna Wells



Jane Kurtz



Mary Ellen High



Karyn Akers



Doris Halfhill



Lucille Dunlavy

GIRLS OF
CHILDREN'S

THE DORMITORY
COTTAGE



Margaret Simkins



**M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY
AMERICAN PRINTING
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**